United Nations A/C.2/70/SR.23

General Assembly
Seventieth session

Official Records

Distr.: General
5 January 2016

Original: English

Second Committee

Summary record of the 23rd meeting
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Thursday, 29 October 2015, at 10 a.m.

Chair: Mr. Logar ..... (Slovenia)
later: Mr. Carrillo Gómez ..... (Paraguay)

Contents

Agenda item 23: Groups of countries in special situations

(a) Follow-up to the Fourth United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries

(b) Follow-up to the second United Nations Conference on Landlocked Developing Countries

This record is subject to correction.

Corrections should be sent as soon as possible, under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned, to the Chief of the Documents Control Unit (srcorrections@un.org), and incorporated in a copy of the record.

Corrected records will be reissued electronically on the Official Document System of the United Nations (http://documents.un.org/).

15-18862 (E)

Please recycle

The meeting was called to order at 10.15 a.m.

Agenda item 23: Groups of countries in special situations

(a) Follow-up to the Fourth United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries (A/70/83-E/2015/75, A/70/292 and A/70/408; A/C.2/70/2)

(b) Follow-up to the second United Nations Conference on Landlocked Developing Countries (A/70/305)

1. **Mr. Acharya** (Under-Secretary-General and High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States), introducing the report of the Secretary-General on implementation of the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2011-2020 (Istanbul Programme of Action) (A70/83-E/2015/75), said that economic growth had slowed in the least developed countries in 2014 and consequently fewer of their economies had expanded at the 7 per cent target rate set by the Istanbul Programme of Action. The declining prospects for economic growth had substantially hindered countries' ability to reduce poverty and improve health and living conditions. Extreme poverty in least developed countries continued to be unacceptably high.

2. Progress towards the goals and targets in the eight priority areas of the Istanbul Programme of Action had been mixed. Access to information and communications technologies had continued to expand and domestic connectivity had improved. However, agriculture remained the largest source of employment, and low agricultural productivity, coupled with limited absorption of labour in non-agricultural sectors, posed a serious challenge to poverty reduction. Export structures dominated by primary commodities limited the ability of the least developed countries to shift their economies towards activities with higher value added, which was essential for poverty reduction and structural transformation. Progress in human and social development had also been mixed. High enrolment rates and gender equality had been achieved at the primary school level in most least developed countries, but enrolment in secondary and tertiary education remained low. A more encouraging development was the increase in the percentage of women serving in parliaments, which had risen from 9.2 per cent in 2001 to 21.3 per cent in 2014.

3. Eroding fiscal space and dwindling foreign reserves had made many of the least developed countries more vulnerable to exogenous shocks. They also faced persistent challenges associated with disaster reduction management, as exemplified by the impact of the recent natural disasters in Vanuatu and Nepal. Reducing vulnerability would require significant progress in the eight priority areas of the Programme of Action. The twenty-first session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change would provide an opportunity to ensure adequate financing to support the least developed countries' efforts with regard to climate change.

4. Domestic savings remained weak in the vast majority of least developed countries. At the same time, preliminary estimates for 2014 pointed to a 15 per cent decline in bilateral net (ODA), the largest source of international public finance for most least developed countries. While the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Initiative and the Multilateral Debt Relief Initiative had reduced debt burdens, they had not addressed all the debt challenges facing least developed countries. Foreign direct investment (FDI) flows had increased somewhat, but the share of least developed countries in such investment globally was still only 2 per cent.

5. Least developed countries would be unable to graduate from that category without productive capacity-building and structural transformation. Increased domestic investment should therefore be channelled into such capacity-building, and steps should be taken to fulfil the ODA commitments set forth in the Istanbul Programme of Action. The high-level midterm review of the Programme's implementation would afford an opportunity to engage all stakeholders in a thorough assessment of progress and lessons learned, reaffirm the commitments to and strengthen partnerships for implementation, and ensure coherence between the priorities of the least developed countries and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

6. Introducing the report of the Secretary-General on the feasibility study for a United Nations technology bank for the least developed countries (A/70/408), he said that the high-level panel established by the Secretary-General to carry out a feasibility study of the proposed technology bank had determined that the bank was not only feasible but also desirable and had

asked the Secretary-General to undertake the necessary measures for its operationalization. That recommendation came at a crucial moment, in which the international community was mobilizing to implement the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Facilitating access to science, technology and innovation in the least developed countries would be critical in that regard. The technology bank would also support structural transformation of the economies of the least developed countries, which would enable them to engage in activities with higher added value and promote growth, social progress and resilience against external shocks.

7. The panel had recommended that the capital and recurrent costs of the technology bank should be met from voluntary contributions from various sources and had suggested that it should also leverage North-South, South-South and triangular cooperation. The panel had also recommended that the technology bank should be modelled on the United Nations University, which had a multi-stakeholder governance arrangement that included Member States, the private sector, philanthropic foundations and civil society organizations.

8. Turning to the report of the Secretary-General on the implementation, effectiveness and added value of smooth transition measures (A/70/292), he said that the report provided an in-depth analysis of how such measures had been implemented in recently graduated countries and of how effective they had been in enabling those countries to pursue their national sustainable development strategies. The analysis revealed that, overall, recently graduated countries had continued on their development path with similar levels of ODA flows and exports. Their smooth transition strategies had also received support from some key development partners. Nevertheless, much remained to be done to implement the wide-ranging provisions of General Assembly resolution 67/221. His Office therefore stood ready to coordinate United Nations system support as more countries moved towards graduation in the years ahead.

9. Introducing the first report of the Secretary-General on implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action for Landlocked Developing Countries for the Decade 2014-2024 (A/70/305), which represented the benchmark against which future progress would be measured, he said that some landlocked developing countries had experienced solid average growth in gross domestic product (GDP) in recent years. If sustained, that growth would be critical in efforts to eliminate poverty. A return to peace and stability would also be crucial in securing development gains in a number of landlocked developing countries. However, plummeting global fuel prices, currency devaluations and fluctuations, an economic slowdown in some major global markets and sectors as well as poor trade performance were expected to have a negative impact in some countries.

10. Transit policy issues remained crucial for landlocked developing countries, as many did not enjoy unhindered access to the sea. Effective implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action in that area was therefore critical. Other priority areas included increased efforts to facilitate access to the World Trade Organization (WTO) for landlocked developing countries and further upgrades to some of their national road networks.

11. In the area of international trade, the earlier steady expansion of merchandise exports from landlocked developing countries had slowed, largely as a result of prolonged sluggish growth and the downward trend of commodity prices. Furthermore, landlocked developing countries still contributed a negligible share to global merchandise trade and the vast majority remained marginalized from the global trading system.

12. With regard to regional integration, landlocked developing countries participated in numerous regional trade agreements and bilateral and international investment agreements, which showed their commitment to utilize FDI to spur inclusive growth and sustainable development.

13. Concerning structural economic transformation, the contribution of the agricultural sector was in steady decline. At the same time the contribution of manufacturing to GDP had fallen by 3 per cent since 2003, a worrying trend given the critical role of manufacturing as an engine for economic growth and transformation.

14. ODA flows to landlocked developing countries had increased slightly in 2013, but remained well below their 2010 level. Meanwhile, FDI had fallen by 11 per cent, the second decline in two consecutive periods. The international community should arrest that trend, as such investment played a key role in strengthening productive capacity, opening new markets and boosting exports.

15. A roadmap for the successful implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action was in place, and a number of important intergovernmental activities had been undertaken in support of landlocked developing countries. Effective implementation hinged on the ability to successfully mainstream the Programme of Action into national and sectoral development plans and into the work of multilateral organizations. Turning landlocked developing countries into land-linked economies would require concerted efforts and close collaboration by those countries, transit countries and development partners in all the above priority areas.

16. **Mr. Carrillo Gómez** (Paraguay), commending the High Representative and his staff for their work in support of landlocked developing countries, noted that under the Vienna Programme of Action and General Assembly resolution 69/232, the Office of the High Representative had been entrusted with preparing indicators for monitoring the implementation of the Programme of Action. In order to do so, the Office would require the committed support of all development partners of landlocked developing countries. His delegation would work closely with the Office and with other Member States to provide that support.

17. **Ms. Carroll** (United Kingdom) enquired why the United Nations University had been considered preferable to the other options considered — namely, Sustainable Energy for All and the United Nations Global Compact — as the model for the institutional arrangements to establish the technology bank for least developed countries.

18. **Mr. Dennis** (Liberia) requested information on the situation of the Group of Seven Plus, which were part of the group of least developed countries.

19. **Mr. Acharya** (Under-Secretary-General and High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States) said that his Office was currently working in close coordination with various United Nations agencies and institutions and with Member States to develop indicators for the Vienna Programme of Action. The Group of Seven Plus had not been officially recognized by the United Nations and was not mentioned specifically in the Istanbul Programme of Action. However, the latter did clearly refer to the particular challenges faced by countries in conflict and post-conflict situations and highlighted the need for tailored measures to enable them to address those challenges.

20. With regard to institutional arrangements for the technology bank, he explained that the high-level panel had concluded that the United Nations University was the most suitable model in part because it had been established by the General Assembly in its resolution 2951 (XXVII) and was therefore an institution that enjoyed the ownership and support of the entire membership of the Organization; such a model would be needed in order to garner the strong Member State support and involvement required to ensure the success of the technology bank. At the same time, the University's governance structure allowed for participation by partners from the private sector, philanthropic institutions and civil society, which would also be crucial for the technology bank. From a financial standpoint, the United Nations University had been considered the best model for managing the voluntary contributions to be sought from various sources to cover the costs of the technology bank.

21. **Ms. Moleko** (South Africa), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, said that the reports of the Secretary-General revealed a sobering reality with regard to the situation of least developed and landlocked developing countries and showed that the recently adopted 2030 Agenda would remain an unattainable dream for countries that were lagging behind on the path to development. The full implementation of the Istanbul Programme of Action was essential in order to achieve the ambitious goal of enabling half of all least developed countries to graduate from that category by 2020. The international community should provide adequate support for that purpose; in particular, States should meet their ODA commitments. Duty-free and quota-free market access for all products from all least developed countries, debt relief and increased FDI were also vitally important, as was the full implementation of the Bali package resulting from the Ninth WTO Ministerial Conference.

22. The midterm review of the Programme of Action should yield a comprehensive outcome that would provide a strong impetus for the realization of existing initiatives and commitments and the launch of new initiatives, building on the decisions contained in the Addis Ababa Action Agenda, the 2030 Agenda and the outcome of the Paris Climate Change Conference.

23. The Group of 77 and China welcomed the recommendation of the high-level panel regarding the feasibility and desirability of the technology bank for least developed countries and invited the Secretary-General to undertake the necessary measures to ensure its full operationalization during the current session. Development partners should provide the necessary financial support for that purpose. As to measures to support countries graduating from the least developed country category, the graduation process should not jeopardize their development and should ensure that their progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals was irreversible.

24. Landlocked developing countries faced persistent difficulties in addressing structural challenges that inhibited their full participation in global production networks and isolated them from global markets. Structural transformation of their economies was imperative if they were to achieve sustained economic growth and poverty eradication in the next decade. Development partners should provide targeted technical and financial support for the implementation of the specific actions identified in the Vienna Programme of Action.

25. Efforts to assist least developed and landlocked developing countries would benefit immensely from the Istanbul Programme of Action and the Vienna Programme of Action both being in close synergy with the 2030 Agenda and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda. The international community and the United Nations system, especially the Office of the High Representative, should further strengthen their support for the aforementioned group of countries in order to enable them to make structural changes to their economies and attain sustainable development.

26. **Mr. Régis** (Haiti), speaking on behalf of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), said that CARICOM was particularly sensitive to the issues facing the least developed countries and welcomed the recent commitments made by Member States to ensure a better life for present and future generations, including through the Small Island Developing States (SIDS) Accelerated Modalities of Action (SAMOA) Pathway, which emphasized the existential threat posed by climate change to the most vulnerable of the least developed countries, including small island developing States such as Haiti. The outcome of the Paris Climate Change Conference would be important for strengthening and broadening the overall framework for the fight against global warming.

27. The various actions undertaken in 2015 in favour of sustainable development undoubtedly had the potential to strengthen the structural capacities of the least developed countries. However, the Secretary-General's report on the Istanbul Programme of Action (A/70/83-E/2015/75) indicated that much remained to be done in that regard. The economic progress seen in 2013 in least developed countries had stalled in 2014, thus also slowing progress towards poverty reduction. Persistently low rates of FDI continued to hinder the strengthening of productive capacity, and the decline in manufacturing had also slowed the shift to more productive activities. While progress had been made in the information and technology sector, it was not sufficient for the sector to serve as an engine for development. As the possibilities open to least developed countries with respect to science, technology and innovation remained limited, CARICOM strongly encouraged the Secretary-General to operationalize the technology bank.

28. While the positive trends with regard to trade in least developed countries were welcome, their share in global trade was still far from the goal of 2 per cent by 2020. The persistent deficit in the balance of trade also constituted a major challenge for least developed countries. It was therefore regrettable that the developed countries had not expanded duty-free and quota-free access to their markets in accordance with WTO agreements and guidelines. CARICOM urged other countries to follow the example of China and Chile, which had granted special access to least developed countries for 99.55 per cent and 97 per cent of their tariff lines, respectively. The CARICOM countries remained optimistic about the success of the Istanbul Programme of Action and were committed to accelerating progress in the context of the midterm review of its implementation in 2016.

29. *Mr. Carrillo Gómez (Paraguay), Vice-Chair, took the Chair.*

30. **Mr. Momen** (Bangladesh), speaking on behalf of the Group of Least Developed Countries, said that full and effective implementation of the Istanbul Programme of Action by all stakeholders was essential if the target of halving the number of least developed countries by 2020 was to be reached. Moreover, without the development of those countries, the global

aim of sustainable development in which no one was left behind would remain a myth. It was a matter of grave concern that ODA, the largest source of development financing for many least developed countries, had fallen by 15 per cent in 2014. That trend had to be reversed immediately. Development partners should fulfil their commitments to provide 0.15 to 0.20 per cent of their gross national income (GNI) as aid to least developed countries. Developing countries should also strive to assist least developed countries in their development efforts, although such support should complement, not replace, North-South support.

31. Trade played a catalytic role in strengthening the productive capacity of least developed countries and could be an engine for their development. However, their share of global trade had stagnated at around 1 per cent for four decades. Developed countries, together with developing countries that were in a position to do so, should provide duty-free and quota-free market access for all products from all least developed countries. To realize the potential of trade to reduce poverty and create jobs, least developed countries should be enabled to double their share of global exports by 2020. To that end, they should receive at least 50 per cent of Aid for Trade resources. Preferential and simplified rules of origin that would contribute meaningfully to market access by least developed countries were essential to fulfil the Bali package of commitments to least developed countries. Furthermore, least developed countries desiring to join WTO required capacity-building support tailored to their economic development level and needs.

32. The vulnerability of least developed countries to economic, natural and environmental shocks and disasters and to climate change was exacerbated by natural and human-induced crises. Least developed countries also suffered from heavy debt burdens and debt volatility. Measures were therefore needed to build their resilience and enable them to withstand various kinds of shocks and crises. In particular, measures were urgently needed to ensure debt sustainability, including debt cancellation and the provision of grants and other concessional funding. In addition, developed countries should take care to formulate their economic policies so as to minimize the negative effects of recession on poor countries.

33. It was important to have a resilience fund for least developed countries to enhance their ability to overcome crises and external shocks. They would also need international assistance in all priority action areas highlighted in the Sendai Framework for Disaster Reduction. Climate change was a question of life and death for many least developed countries, and the Paris Climate Change Conference must therefore yield an ambitious agreement that would save their lives and livelihoods.

34. The Group of Least Developed Countries welcomed the recommendation of the high-level panel regarding the establishment of a technology bank and invited the Secretary-General to take the necessary steps to operationalize it during the current session. It called upon development partners to provide the necessary financial support for that purpose. The Group also believed that an international investment support centre for least developed countries should be established, building on the platform provided by the Addis Ababa Action Agenda.

35. The least developed countries would require sustained support from development partners to enable them to graduate from the least developed category by 2020 and then go on to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. They also required increased support, including from United Nations organizations, to ensure coordinated implementation and coherent follow-up of the Istanbul Programme of Action and related development initiatives. To that end, the Office of the High Representative should be adequately resourced. The midterm review of the Istanbul Programme of Action would be critically important for stocktaking and for charting the future path for the development plans of least developed countries. The review should yield a comprehensive outcome that would provide a strong impetus for the fulfilment of existing commitments and the launch of specific global initiatives and measures that would build on the Addis Ababa Action Agenda, the 2030 Agenda and the outcome of the Paris Climate Change Conference.

36. In order to achieve a more equitable and inclusive world for all without hunger and poverty, differential and preferential treatment for least developed countries must be maintained. For the sake of all countries of the world, rich and poor alike, no county must be left behind.

37. **Ms. Chanda** (Zambia), speaking on behalf of the Group of Landlocked Developing Countries, expressed gratitude to the High Representative and his staff for their collaboration with her Government in organizing

the high-level follow-up meeting to the second United Nations Conference on Landlocked Developing Countries, the outcome of which had been the Livingstone Call for Action for the Accelerated Implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action. As noted in the Secretary-General's report (A/70/305), infrastructure development was fundamental for the overall development of landlocked developing countries. The report also highlighted constraints facing landlocked countries, including higher transaction costs than their maritime neighbours and limited and more costly access to electricity and to broadband Internet. While it was too soon to see significant changes from the implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action, she looked forward to seeing early progress towards some easily achievable results.

38. One of the most pressing issues to be addressed was mainstreaming the Vienna Programme of Action into the plans and policies of countries and into the work of the United Nations. To that end, the Secretariat should provide guidance on how that integration could be achieved, including comprehensive guidelines on how the various stakeholders could fulfil their commitments under the Programme of Action, as well as a set of indicators for assessing progress. As ODA and FDI were central to the development of landlocked developing countries, it was worrying that FDI flows to those countries had continued to decline and that ODA remained below 2010 levels. Those problems were compounded by currency crises and a weakening demand for exports from landlocked developing countries.

39. Given that the success of the Vienna Programme of Action would depend on strengthening existing sources of support and identifying new sources, she called upon development partners to meet their relevant commitments, including by providing financial and technical assistance and undertaking capacity-building activities. Assistance was needed, in particular, to enhance the capacity of landlocked developing countries to prepare and carry out large-scale, long-term infrastructure investment projects and to identify innovative financing for them. Development partners must also fulfil their promise to establish new investment vehicles, such as development-oriented venture capital funds, blended finance, risk mitigation instruments and innovative debt funding structures. Such vehicles would be critical in bridging funding shortfalls in infrastructure development, among other areas. Furthermore, there was an urgent need for an effective and inclusive global infrastructure forum, as envisaged in the Addis Ababa Action Agenda, with a clear mandate to align and coordinate established and new infrastructure initiatives, and to identify and address infrastructure and capacity gaps.

40. The sharing of best practice and experience should be encouraged in the context of monitoring and reviewing the implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action at the country level. Landlocked developing countries and transit countries would need assistance, in particular, to support their efforts to establish effective national coordination mechanisms. In addition, the Economic and Social Council should be asked to incorporate progress reviews in the high-level political forum on sustainable development, the Annual Ministerial Review and the Development Cooperation Forum.

41. The Group trusted that WTO would deliver fully on its development-oriented mandate and called on partners to facilitate the accession of landlocked developing countries to the Organization, which should grant them special recognition and ensure adequate treatment of their needs in multilateral negotiations. It also wished to see the speedy conclusion of the Doha Development Round of trade negotiations and the ratification of the Trade Facilitation Agreement.

42. The Group called on multilateral development banks to channel the resources of long-term investors towards sustainable development, including green bonds, while also focusing on developing and maintaining the physical links of landlocked developing countries to the regional transport infrastructure network.

43. Lastly, since the Vienna Programme of Action and the 2030 Agenda were complementary, the points of convergence and synergies between them should be identified and exploited.

44. **Mr. Phansourivong** (Lao People's Democratic Republic), speaking on behalf of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), said that the Association welcomed the adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, with its focus on poverty eradication. The international community should now ensure that it was implemented effectively. Since implementation would be particularly challenging for developing countries, especially those in special situations, the international community

should continue to support those countries in implementing their respective national development plans and the various global development initiatives, including the 2030 Agenda. The progress made thus far in that respect had contributed to the development of least developed countries, landlocked developing countries and small island developing States and had helped to improve their connectivity and enhance their productive capacity and competitiveness. However, such countries continued to face serious challenges and required increased support and assistance from the international community.

45. Considerable progress had been made in terms of regional cooperation and integration, including through the establishment of the ASEAN Economic Community in the current year. While that was cause for celebration, there was still a need to narrow the development gap among the Association's members, some of which were countries in special situations. To that end, ASEAN had adopted various initiatives, including the Initiative for ASEAN Integration, the ASEAN Framework for Equitable Economic Development and the Master Plan on ASEAN Connectivity, which had significantly contributed to poverty alleviation, helping to narrow the development gap and promote sustainable development in the region.

46. **Mr. Shcherbakov** (Ecuador), speaking on behalf of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC), said that CELAC supported the efforts being made in preparation for the midterm review of the Istanbul Programme of Action in 2016 and trusted that the results would be positive. CELAC also welcomed the adoption and implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action and reaffirmed its commitment to promoting appropriate consideration of the special needs and particular challenges of landlocked developing and least developed countries, in accordance with the provisions of the two programmes of action.

47. **Ms. Karabaeva** (Kyrgyzstan), welcoming the fact that the special situation of landlocked developing countries had been taken into account in the 2030 Agenda, said that many of those countries would nevertheless face serious challenges, particularly with regard to financing, in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. Her delegation therefore called upon developed countries to fulfil their ODA commitments as reaffirmed in the Addis Ababa Action Agenda.

48. In order to implement the Vienna Programme of Action at the national level, her Government had developed an interministerial plan reflecting the Programme's six priority areas. In addition, it was seeking to boost the country's participation in regional and international trade and to develop regional transport infrastructure, including through the Shanghai Cooperation Organization. The country's participation in the Eurasian Economic Union, which it had joined in 2015, should open up unfettered access to a larger market for goods and services, capital and labour and would provide opportunities for further development of the country's transport capacity. As part of the Sustainable Energy for All initiative, Kyrgyzstan was building new hydroelectric installations, which would not only enhance access to electricity and ensure energy security, but would also create jobs and increase the country's export potential. Her country would continue to do its utmost to implement the Programme of Action in keeping with its financial abilities and its national development priorities.

49. **Ms. Medvedeva** (Russian Federation) recalled that it was fair that the 2030 Agenda and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda had taken into account the needs of least developed countries, developing countries and countries in special situations. In that context, she supported the efforts of least developed countries to draw up and implement their own national development strategies and programmes in line with the priorities and goals of the Istanbul Programme of Action.

50. She agreed that the slow economic growth in most of the least developed countries was cause for concern. The factors accounting for that situation should be analysed and corrective measures identified. Increased support should be provided to boost the production capacity of least developed countries, which would encourage job creation, foster sustainable economic growth and support economic diversification.

51. Her delegation welcomed the recommendations of the high-level panel concerning the technology bank for least developed countries and supported the proposal to launch the bank during the midterm review of the Istanbul Programme of Action in 2016. The review should be an important step towards the international community taking action to assist the least developed countries. Her delegation also welcomed the efforts of least developed countries to graduate from that category by 2020 in accordance with General Assembly

resolution 59/209, the Istanbul Programme of Action and the outcome documents of the various international conferences on financing for development.

52. The Russian Federation reaffirmed its commitment to provide development assistance to countries in need, including least developed countries. It viewed debt relief as one of the most important means of assisting such countries and, under the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries initiative, had written off most of the debt from African countries. It had also helped to reduce the debt burden of some countries through debt for development swaps. To boost the trade potential of least developed countries, the country had put in place a preferential treatment scheme, the benefits of which had been extended to more than 100 other developing countries. An initiative was planned to broaden the scope of tariff preferences for least developed countries within the framework of the Eurasian Economic Union.

53. Since 2010, her Government had been providing assistance to the Government of Belarus with a view to enabling it to join WTO. As part of its assistance to landlocked countries, the Russian Federation was striving to build partnerships with the countries of North-East Asia, including Mongolia, through the Greater Tumen Initiative. To that end, her Government had put forward various project and investment proposals, including one for regional energy cooperation and another for the development of the Russian port of Zarubino. Those initiatives were expected to help strengthen partnerships between landlocked and transit developing countries.

54. **Mr. Rodrigues dos Santos** (Brazil) said that the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development offered a new paradigm for poverty eradication and development in which no one would be left behind. The first priority in implementing it should be the groups of countries that were currently furthest behind. It was encouraging to see that both the 2030 Agenda and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda incorporated a number of commitments centred on the priority needs of least developed and landlocked developing countries. In his delegation's view, synergies should be sought between the Technology Facilitation Mechanism created under the Addis Ababa Action Agenda and the technology bank to be established for least developed countries.

55. Brazil undertook many regional cooperation initiatives with developing countries in general and with least developed countries in particular. An example was a South-South cooperation project with several African countries aimed at enhancing cotton production through technology transfer. Brazil had also been instrumental in launching a global network of breastmilk banks aimed at improving food security for infants in developing countries. It was a source of pride that that South-South cooperation project, which had initially focused only on Latin American countries, was now disseminating knowledge and technologies to numerous developing countries in other regions, especially in Africa, and thus helping to reduce preventable diseases and neonatal mortality. A project of the Union of South American Nations was establishing road links between Bolivia and Paraguay, both landlocked developing countries, and ports in Argentina, Brazil, Chile and Uruguay.

56. His Government believed that projects involving infrastructure integration for the benefit of least developed countries and landlocked developing countries should be granted special and differentiated treatment by international development banks and financial institutions. It stood ready to continue working bilaterally, regionally and internationally to address the particular needs of developing countries, especially those in special situations.

57. **Mr. Sareer** (Maldives), recalling that four years had elapsed since the Maldives had graduated from the least developed country category, said that the smooth transition process had not worked well in practice. No plans were in place to ensure that the development gains of recently graduated countries were preserved, and consequently the Government had been obliged to invest in infrastructure that was needed to sustain the development gains that had allowed the Maldives to graduate. The country had found it increasingly difficult to access ODA and it no longer received concessionary financing, which had forced it to borrow at unsustainable interest rates, leading to greater debt burdens. In addition, following his country's graduation, major markets had erected tariff and non-tariff barriers to its products.

58. The Maldives was also a small island developing country, a status that came with a unique set of challenges, including limited natural resources, small populations and small economies, high transportation and production costs, heavy dependence on imports and extreme vulnerability to economic shocks. Climate change, extreme weather events and increasingly frequent disasters threatened its survival and viability,

and high climate change adaption costs placed additional burdens on already tight budgets.

59. The indicators currently used to assess readiness for graduation did not provide a holistic view of a society's advancement or of its vulnerabilities. For example, GDP might measure how wealthy a country was, but it did not reflect the purchasing power of its wealth or how resilient it was to shocks, nor did it take account of the country's unique circumstances and specific challenges. In addition, countries were only expected to meet two of the three thresholds for graduation. The Maldives had never met the economic vulnerability threshold, largely because it was highly exposed to shocks, yet it had been assumed that its relatively high GDP per capita would enable it to weather any shocks that occurred. That assumption had proved false. Indeed, the country's graduation had needed to be delayed when a tsunami in 2004 had inflicted damages amounting to more than 60 per cent of its GDP. Sadly, the same pattern had been repeated in the case of many of the countries recently assessed for graduation.

60. The Maldives had repeatedly drawn attention to the inadequacy of the graduation criteria and the smooth transition process, yet nothing substantive had been done to address the problems. Both the Addis Ababa Action Agenda and the 2030 Agenda called for better treatment of countries with economies in transition, including graduating countries. With more countries being assessed for graduation, the sustainability of their development gains must be a priority. It was an obligation of the international community, and in particular the United Nations, to ensure that the progress made by graduating countries was not reversed and that their inherent vulnerabilities were not disregarded. More institutionalized and coordinated support for graduating countries was needed.

61. **Mr. Madisa** (Botswana) said that landlocked developing countries faced unique yet similar challenges. They continued to fare poorly in the social development sphere and were at risk of not achieving internationally agreed development goals, including the Sustainable Development Goals. They were isolated from global markets for reasons of geography alone, and their trade volumes remained low, while their transport costs were continually on the increase. In addition, most were dependent on a single commodity. Food security and agriculture in landlocked developing countries were threatened by land degradation, desertification and climate change. Indeed, landlocked developing countries were among the categories of countries most vulnerable to the adverse impact of climate change and least capable of embarking on effective mitigation and adaptation programmes. Their prospects for economic growth were uncertain owing to their vulnerability to external shocks and to the volatility of commodity prices. The prohibitive cost of setting up business in such countries discouraged investment, further constraining their economies and impeding their integration into the global trading system. For countries such as Botswana, those challenges were compounded by being classified as a middle-income country.

62. Landlocked developing countries required increased support to enable them to develop the necessary infrastructure to facilitate the movement of goods and services. Increased capacity-building, technical and financial assistance aimed at supporting the development of road, rail and telecommunications networks, together with pipelines for water and energy infrastructure, would assist them in addressing the challenges they faced. Full implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action would go a long way towards ensuring that landlocked developing countries could successfully implement the 2030 Agenda. His delegation therefore called on the international community and relevant organizations to integrate the Vienna Programme of Action into their programmes of work.

63. **Ms. Yeshmagambetova** (Kazakhstan) said that the Almaty Programme of Action had helped to create new linkages and strengthen partnerships between landlocked developing countries, transit developing countries and partners, including multilateral institutions. Since 2003, landlocked developing countries had achieved higher GDP growth rates and doubled their share of global merchandise exports. Her Government was hopeful that under the Vienna Programme of Action Kazakhstan would succeed in overcoming the most limiting effects of landlockedness and thus achieve the ambitious goal of its 2050 strategy: becoming one of the world's 30 most developed economies by 2050.

64. The specific actions envisaged in the Vienna Programme of Action were already being implemented as part of the country's "100 Concrete Steps" initiative, which called for urgent, drastic reforms in all key sectors with a view to strengthening human and

institutional capacities; enhancing public-sector service delivery; boosting economic productivity, diversification and competitiveness; and attracting capital, technology and business. Bottlenecks and inefficiencies in national transport networks were also being addressed and infrastructure upgraded. Production and trading systems were being reorganized so as to reduce reliance on a few agricultural products and high-bulk raw materials and move Kazakhstan towards an economy largely geared towards global value chains, manufacturing and industrial activity. Her Government was committed to moving forward with greater sensitivity to the concerns and needs of the private sector. It called on developed countries to provide trade preferences, including duty-free treatment, for the products of least developed countries.

65. As the country furthest from any seaport, Kazakhstan understood the necessity of developing effective transit systems and transport infrastructure. The top priorities of its 2050 strategy — eliminating trade and transit barriers and developing logistics infrastructure — mirrored the objectives of the Almaty Programme of Action and the Vienna Programme of Action. In line with the sustainable energy goals established under the latter and also under the 2030 Agenda, Kazakhstan looked forward to hosting Astana Expo 2017 under the theme "Future Energy". The Expo would provide insights on clean, affordable and renewable energy sources. Her Government hoped that least developed countries, landlocked developing countries and small island developing States would participate.

66. The Vienna Programme of Action and the 2030 Agenda provided clear guidance on how landlocked developing countries could overcome many of the difficulties that had prevented them from realizing broad-based and sustainable prosperity. If successfully implemented, they would transform the economies of landlocked countries and put them firmly on a path to economic prosperity and resilience. Landlocked developing countries should therefore strive to integrate those programmes into their national development frameworks, priorities and strategies.

67. **Mr. Altangerel** (Mongolia) said that 2015 had been a year of notable successes for landlocked developing countries. At the High-level Forum of Heads of State and Government of Landlocked Developing Countries, leaders had expressed a collective commitment to the accelerated implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action. The subsequent high-level meeting held in Livingstone, Zambia, had helped to mark the way forward in implementing the Programme. The challenges faced by landlocked developing countries had also been recognized in the Addis Ababa Action Agenda and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Nevertheless, landlocked developing countries continued to face serious constraints owing to a lack of access to the sea, which limited the value of their exports and their capacity to diversify their products and markets, hindering their growth and development. It was crucial to address their special needs, in particular those relating to infrastructure development, trade development and facilitation, regional integration, productive capacity-building and structural transformation, in the implementation and follow-up of the Addis Ababa Action Agenda and the 2030 Agenda.

68. His delegation welcomed the decision taken in Addis Ababa to launch a new global infrastructure forum and supported broad-based consultations on the modalities for its establishment. It also believed that greater attention should be given to the concerns and needs of landlocked developing countries within WTO and supported the launching of a dedicated work programme aimed at promoting trade facilitation and diversification, Aid for Trade, electronic commerce and WTO accession for those countries.

69. Climate change, land degradation, desertification, deforestation and drought posed serious threats to the economic and social development of landlocked developing countries. The outcome of the Paris Climate Change Conference should therefore provide adequate support for their efforts to address those challenges.

70. Lastly, he urged landlocked developing countries that had not yet done so to accede to or ratify the Multilateral Agreement for the Establishment of an International Think Tank for Landlocked Developing Countries.

71. **Ms. Luo** Jin (China) said that in a context of sluggish global economic growth, a widening gap between the North and the South, worsening humanitarian crises and frequent natural disasters, the least developed countries and landlocked developing countries were suffering from an economic downturn and a decrease in external assistance. The Ebola epidemic had yet to be completely stamped out and affected countries were still struggling with post-

epidemic reconstruction. As ODA was the most direct and effective means of support for least developed and landlocked developing countries, her delegation called on the main donors to reverse the downward trend of ODA resources, honour their ODA commitments, increase the proportion of their assistance earmarked for those countries and address imbalances in the distribution of assistance.

72. The international community should increase support for and cooperation with least developed and landlocked developing countries, with a particular focus on areas essential to their sustainable development. It should also take measures to ensure a smooth transition for graduating and recently graduated countries. Similarly, development partners should support the establishment of technology banks and mechanisms aimed at facilitating scientific innovation and promoting investment in least developed countries. Those countries had achieved some progress under the Istanbul Programme of Action, but multiple challenges remained. The 2016 midterm review conference should identify lessons learned and point to practical measures for accelerating progress towards the goal of enabling half of the least developed countries to meet the graduation criteria by 2020.

73. The Vienna Programme of Action had reinforced development partnerships and had drawn a new blueprint for the development of landlocked developing countries. China stood ready to work with all parties in implementing it and would do its part to support those countries' efforts to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. In that context, the functions and resources of the Office of the High Representative should be further strengthened to ensure that it had adequate capacity to monitor implementation of both the Vienna Programme of Action and the Istanbul Programme of Action.

74. China had been a steadfast supporter of least developed and landlocked developing countries and had provided them with various forms of assistance through South-South cooperation. It would continue to invest in least developed countries and strengthen coordination and cooperation to support the development of countries in special situations.

75. **Mr. Philakone** (Lao People's Democratic Republic) said that the adoption of the Vienna Programme of Action in 2014, like the adoption of the Istanbul Programme of Action and the Samoa Pathway, had demonstrated the commitment of the international community to assist groups of countries in special situations in addressing their special needs and challenges. The effective implementation of those programmes was of utmost importance. His Government had integrated the priorities of the Vienna Programme of Action into its vision of transforming the Lao People's Democratic Republic from a landlocked to a land-linked country by promoting the development of connectivity with neighbouring countries. It was also exploring ways of reducing transaction and transportation costs and enhancing the country's competitiveness through a pilot project for the establishment of a single-window checkpoint between the Lao People's Democratic Republic and Viet Nam. The country was also taking an active part in the process of building the ASEAN Economic Community, which would provide a solid basis for regional cooperation and integration.

76. Since his country's progress in eradicating poverty and creating the necessary conditions to graduate from underdevelopment by around 2020 would not have been possible without the support of the international community, he trusted that development partners would continue to support its efforts.

77. **Ms. Yee** (Myanmar) said that her delegation was pleased to note that the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development had incorporated some of the key development challenges and priorities of the least developed countries. She called on development partners to renew their commitment to ensure full and effective implementation of the 2030 Agenda, the Addis Ababa Action Agenda and the Istanbul Programme of Action, in particular through enhanced development assistance, trade facilitation and technology transfer to least developed countries. ODA remained the primary source of external financing and contributed significantly to those countries' efforts to achieve internationally agreed development goals. Her delegation therefore appealed to development partners to take concrete steps towards providing at least 0.20 per cent of their GNI as ODA to least developed countries.

78. Recognizing that graduation from the least developed country category must be accompanied by effective measures to sustain the development process, her Government was currently implementing a 20-year comprehensive development plan aimed at enabling Myanmar to achieve middle-income status by 2030. Myanmar had opened up its economy following the adoption of more liberal trade and economic policies in

2012 and had attracted growing amounts of FDI. While the primary responsibility for development rested with the Government and people of Myanmar, a favourable external environment and increased ODA would complement its development efforts, and her delegation therefore called on the United Nations and development partners for continued support.

79. **Ms. Derderian** (United States of America) said that her Government recognized that fulfilling its pledge to implement the 2030 Agenda and leave no one behind would mean adapting its development efforts to address the special circumstances that many countries faced. Climate change, geographic isolation, chronic violence and conflict, and other external factors beyond the control of individuals, businesses and even Governments, played a significant role in shaping countries' economic development outcomes. Those realities must not become an excuse for inaction, however.

80. Her Government was committed to focusing ODA resources where they could produce the greatest impact and would therefore continue to channel aid to low-income countries that were committed to growth and poverty reduction, sound public financial management and democratic, accountable and transparent government. Since 2005, the Government's allocation to low-income countries as a portion of total bilateral net ODA had risen from close to 18 per cent to nearly 37 per cent. Nevertheless, overcoming the structural challenges facing countries in special circumstances would require far more than ODA. A commitment to transparent and accountable government and to promoting truly inclusive growth was essential, as was the creation of stable, predictable and enabling investment environments to attract increased and more diversified FDI. By emphasizing accountability and transparency, countries could not only draw greater foreign investment, but also unlock domestic financing.

81. The United States Global Development Lab was transforming the way her country approached international development by bringing a diverse range of partners together to identify, test and scale innovations to solve the world's toughest challenges. Its bilateral assistance programmes had helped to bring electricity to African countries, deliver lifesaving medications, increase school attendance among adolescent girls and boost food supplies. Its pledge to the Green Climate Fund would help to reduce carbon pollution and strengthen resilience in developing countries, especially the poorest and most vulnerable nations.

82. The leadership of the United States in advancing the goals of the Open Government Partnership had increased transparency, bolstered citizen engagement and harnessed new technologies to improve governance and build strong institutions, which was just as important as fostering economic growth and resilience. Furthermore, through its participation in the Addis Tax Initiative, the United States was seeking to help countries to increase their domestic resources.

83. The Addis Ababa Action Agenda and the 2030 Agenda directly addressed many of the special needs of the world's most vulnerable countries. Reaching consensus in those negotiations had required unprecedented compromise, pragmatism and dedication. Guided by the same spirit of cooperation, Member States should avoid rehashing old language that no longer captured the spirit of the new era of universal goals and collaboration. Instead, they should strive to elevate the substance of the Second Committee's resolutions to a higher and more pragmatic level.

84. **Mr. Mikami** (Japan) said that Japan looked forward to cooperating with least developed and landlocked developing countries to implement the Addis Ababa Action Agenda and the 2030 Agenda, as well as the Vienna Programme of Action and the Istanbul Programme of Action. The latter instrument made it clear that least developed countries needed to establish a new paradigm in order to eradicate poverty through the enhancement of productive capacity. That approach was in line with his Government's international cooperation policy, which emphasized capacity development with national ownership and partnership and with the involvement of the private sector. Japan stood ready to engage constructively in the midterm review of the Istanbul Programme of Action in 2016.

85. The protection of intellectual property rights was an essential aspect of successful technology transfer. Maximum use should therefore be made of existing mechanisms of relevant organizations, such as the World Intellectual Property Organization, in order to ensure the efficiency of the proposed technology bank for least developed countries. The bank should be sustainable both financially and institutionally without resources from the regular budget of the United Nations. His delegation wished to stress the importance

of transparency in operationalizing the technology bank and looked forward to future consultations on the matter.

86. **Ms. Özgür** (Turkey) said that development cooperation was an integral part of her Government's foreign policy. It attached special priority to the challenges faced by the most vulnerable groups of countries, in particular the least developed countries. As co-chair of the Group of Friends of the Least Developed Countries, Turkey was committed to providing continued support for those countries' sustainable development efforts. The most prominent features of the Istanbul Programme of Action were its focus on building the productive capacity of least developed countries and promoting their structural transformation, and the commitment to ensure that half of the least developed countries met the criteria for graduation by 2020. While the latter objective might seem ambitious, it was achievable with sufficient political will from all actors. For its part, Turkey had launched an economic and technical cooperation package that committed $200 million annually for projects and programmes benefiting least developed countries. Under its strategy for improving commercial and economic relations with Africa, Turkey had invested nearly $6 billion since 2003.

87. The 2030 Agenda would support the implementation of the Istanbul Programme of Action and other relevant programmes for countries in special situations. Turkey looked forward to hosting the midterm review of the Programme of Action in 2016 and counted on the support of other Member States to ensure a successful outcome. It attached special importance to ensuring that least developed countries had access to knowledge and technology, which were catalysers of structural transformation, and had therefore also offered to host the new technology bank. Turkey looked forward to working with relevant stakeholders in that regard.

88. **Mr. González Franco** (Paraguay), welcoming the Livingstone Call for Action for the Accelerated Implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action and the New York Declaration by the Heads of State and Government of landlocked developing countries, said that the Vienna Programme of Action was a tool for eradicating poverty and achieving sustainable development. One of the Programme's virtues was its emphasis on partnership between landlocked developing countries and transit countries in pursuit of the mutual benefits to be derived from the improvement and maintenance of connectivity infrastructure and transport, customs and logistics systems. His delegation urged all partners to contribute to the timely implementation of the Programme of Action. The strengthening of national capacities for the collection, analysis and dissemination of data in landlocked developing countries would be essential for that purpose, as would implementation of the trade facilitation agreement adopted in Bali in 2013.

89. His delegation also urged all Member States and sustainable development partners to mainstream the special needs and challenges of landlocked developing countries into processes related to the implementation and follow-up of the 2030 Agenda and other initiatives, including the implementation of a technology transfer mechanism, the reform of the international financial and trade systems, strategies for disaster risk reduction and capacity-building to enhance resilience to external economic shocks. Paraguay looked forward to strengthening its ties with the least developed countries, particularly Haiti in the region of Latin America and the Caribbean and the 16 least developed countries that were also, like Paraguay, landlocked developing countries. It therefore planned to contribute actively to the review of the Istanbul Programme of Action in 2016.

The meeting rose at 1.10 p.m.